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SUBJECT: Media Reaction - Russia

I. On August 12 independent liberal Stockholm morning daily "Dagens Nyheter" editorialized on "Back in the USSR" stating that,

"The Russian bombings of the Georgian capital Tbilisi and Gori in central Georgia seem to indicate that the Kremlin's ambitions extend beyond the separatist regions South Ossetia and Abkhazia. It is becoming more and more evident that Russian ambitions may be to dethrone the Georgian President, the young U.S.-educated lawyer Mikhail Sakhasvili....

"The new Czarist Empire does not hesitate to use military force to put pressure on former Soviet republics that are friendly to the West. But the mightiest weapon for the Kremlin is not tanks but rather the dependence on oil...That is one of the main reasons why the EU is tiptoeing around Russia....

"'The Russian action towards former Soviet republics will be a litmus test of what path Russia will take,' is a statement in a report by the Swedish Parliamentary Defense Committee. Now it seems that Georgia has become the litmus test the world has been waiting for."

II. On August 12 the conservative Stockholm morning daily "Svenska Dagbladet" in an editorial headlined "History Has Not Ended," said:

"Despite the last decades arms reductions here (in Sweden) eternal peace has not materialized in our immediate surroundings....

"The war in Georgia contains all the elements, which the realists have warned of. Russia - a country that cannot tolerate that a neighboring country has ambitions to get closer to the West. A state in disintegration where the leadership take panicky actions. Oil- and gas pipelines that have a potential for energy political blackmail. And, not least, an incredibly short distance from going from argument to war....

"Now international negotiating delegations pour into the war zone. This is important, not least to restore a minimum of stability (in the region), but also to secure Georgia's place in the Western world."

III. On August 12, South Sweden's major liberal daily, Malmo-based "Sydsvenskan" opined,

"Georgia can hardly be described as a democratic model state and perhaps there were underrated risks involved in the actions last week against the Ossetia separatists. But Russia's readiness to quickly resort to the use of military force and its obvious intention to push it too far, is to the international community the most concerning and alarming aspect....

"And one cannot dismiss the idea that crossed one's mind. That Russian President Dmitriy Medvedev and, in particular, Prime Minister Vladimir Putin by the (Russian) aggression against Georgia have demonstrated a new and more brutal definition of Russia's 'sphere of interest.' This can also be observed in the rhetoric."

SILVERMAN